Lormes

Country: France

Inhabitants: 1270

Type of area: Sparsely populated

Governance: Local elected mayor

Administrative level: LAU2 with several settlements

About Lormes

Lormes is a small market town located in in the northeast of the department of Nièvre, in the Bourgogne-Franche-Comté region about a three hours-drive away from Paris and Lyon. With around 1,270 inhabitants, the municipality consists of several hamlets. Through its educational, health and cultural facilities and over 30 shops located in the centre, the town servers as a rural services centre for the surrounding area. It is situated in the north-eastern part of the Morvan Regional Nature Park which extends over an area of 281,400 hectares. With its large forests criss-crossed by hiking trails the area is a popular destination for sports enthusiasts and nature lovers.

The population in Lormes has been slightly declining for several years. Although unemployment has not been a major problem so far, Lormes has been facing the challenge of remaining attractive as a place to live for some time now. Against this background, a powerful connection to the internet is seen as a means to increase the attractiveness of this rural community as a place to work and live. In addition to a technical broadband connection, the development of digital skills on the part of citizens is seen as an important task to enable the local community to use digital technologies for its own purposes.

Smartness of Lormes

Lormes has at an early stage seen digital transformation as an opportunity for local development. Already in 2003, an initiative was launched to promote digital inclusion by means of capacity building measures in the local community. Somewhat later, a rural digital hub was set up consisting of eight offices that were equipped with high-speed internet connections. Over the years, the digital hub developed into a vibrant local ecosystem facilitating the emergence of digital projects for the private and public sectors.

In 2018, work began on the installation of a local fibre optic network to provide high-speed internet access to all residents and local businesses. As the village is located in a sparsely populated area, network roll-out was initiated by a public initiative. Based on the network infrastructure operated on behalf of the local authority, commercial operators offer high-speed service packages to individuals and businesses. Today, almost 2000 premises are passed by the local fibre optic network.

Beyond digital capacity building and infrastructure development, Lormes has pursued a participatory policy co-creation process over recent years in the framework of the national "village of the future" programme. Here the focus is on promoting a structured bottom-up approach for harnessing the creativity and capacities of the local community for the further development of the village.

The Smart Journey of Lormes

Promoting digital skills, infrastructure and services
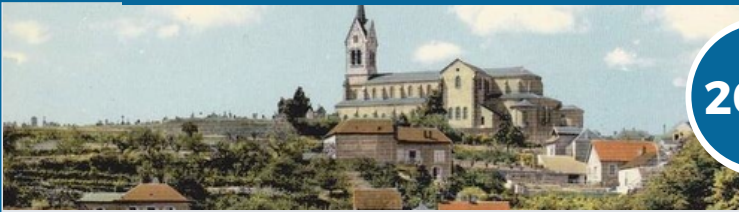
2003

The digital and social journey of Lormes is based on the adoption an innovative district-level policy in the late 1990ies. It aimed to foster the economic and social potential that digital technologies could bring to remote rural areas. As a concrete step, a local 'Digital Mission' association was founded in 2003 by the municipality in partnerships with the residents to promote digital capacities of the population. Beyond capacity building, this association has acted as an accelerator for further 'digital transformation' initiatives.

In 2008, a digital hub was set up in a former derelict slaughterhouse serving as a training and co-working space, including eight small offices.

This facility was equipped with a 100 Mbits/s broadband internet connection and state-of-the-art hardware such as a rooter, a video system and a digital white board. The local 'Digital Mission' association was a major driving force behind conceptualising the digital hub and successfully applying for national funding.

2008

Title of initiative: Rural Digital Hub Creation
OVERALL BUDGET: € 600 000
National / regional fund: 100% (National Agency for Local/Regional Development)
Duration: 2007 - 2008

Lormes participated in the development of the "Faire Compagnie" platform, a digital neighbourhood network, which is run by 34 municipalities. They have joined forced in the municipal group "eMorvan Sommets et Grands Lacs" to offer the neighbourhood platform to their residents. By means of this online offer, residents can get voluntary support in activities of daily living, but also exchange moments of conviviality, according to their needs.

2010

faire compagnie

Title of initiative: Faire Companie Platform
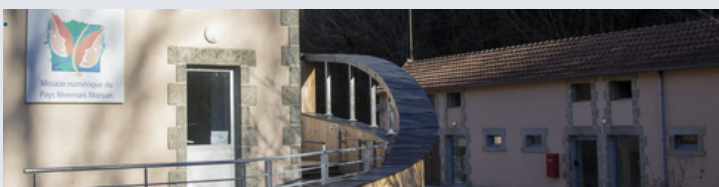**OVERALL BUDGET: € 15 000**
Other national/ regional fund: € 15 000
Duration: 2010 - 2011

Due to staff shortages, the local social centre is currently not actively promoting the "Faire Companie" paltform. As there is now another online service available nationally that facilitates voluntary support for older people in a similar way, promoting "Faire Companie" in Lormes is not currently considered a priority.

2015

The existing digital hub was expanded by six more business and meeting facilities. Also, a FabLab (fabrication laboratory) was added. This small-scale workshop is equipped with an array of flexible computer-controlled tools, enabling to make "almost anything" including technology-enabled products generally perceived as limited to mass production. The FabLab is typically used by school classes and individual citizens alike.

Due to a convincing application involving its digital hub, Lormes was chosen as one of four regional pilots testing the deployment of a fibre-to-the-home (FTTH) Internet network as part of the "future 2020" national plan. Community participation in service design as well as inclusion support were key pillars of the pilot. The 'technical' aspect of the pilot helped establish realistic budgets for wider fibre rollout and confirmed the validity of a 'rural service centre' approach, where investments would be focused on connecting (FTTH) and inter-connecting towns and villages with distinct territorial service infrastructures.

Title of initiative: Digital Hub Expansion
OVERALL BUDGET: € 273 500
EU fund : € 197 000 (ERDF)
Public fund (national) : € 76 500
Duration: 2015 - 2016

Title of initiative: Regional FTTH Pilot
OVERALL BUDGET (Nièvre county): € 62,5 Mio
EU fund : € 6,0 Mio (ERDF)
Other public funds: € 10M (Nièvre county), € 9.25 Mio (Regional Fund), € 22.97 (National Fund)
Private fund: € 14,28 Mio (Nièvre-NumériqueAassociation)
Duration: 2015 - 2016

A co-designed local development strategy

2016

At first, a co-design process was developed for systematically involving all residents in the political decision-making process.

This process was directed towards generating a local development strategy with the participation of the citizens, businesses and the administration. Over a duration of 18 months, the local community took part in open sessions to define three development scenarios for the town. All ideas were analysed by experts togerther with the municipality. As a concrete output, the ideas gathered were transposed into a strategy document entitled "Lormes, the sweet town". The strategy includes roadmap enabling staggered implementation measures.

Lormes joined the "villages of the future" initiative launched by the county Pays Nivernais-Morvan. For about ten years, the town had already worked simultaneously on several levers in order to improve its attractiveness in economic, social and cultural regards. With the "Villages of the future" program Lormes embarked on a new process of sustainable revitalization of its town centre.

To promote sustainable mobility and the revitalisation of the town centre, a joint project was launched to be shaped and supported by the local community.

2018

Title of initiative: Local Development Strategy
OVERALL BUDGETt: € 35 500
EU funds: € 17 750 (LEADER)
Other public funds: € 10 650
Private funds: € 7 100
Duration 2016-2018

Implementation of the local development strategy

The co-designed local development strategy is to be successively implemented by 2027. Beyond the activities pursued so far, it focuses on three further pillars, namely promoting sustainable mobility, revitalising the town centre and improving living conditions in terms of the build environment. Among other measures, the existing digital infrastructure is to be used to achieve these strategic goals.

2019

Facilitating sustainable mobility the municipality financed the development of bicycles lines to promote cycling within the local community.

Bicycle and tricycle rentals have also been set up for residents and visitors to promote sustainable mobility. The next step is to promote inter-communal mobility in the wider Lormes area and to improve existing parking facilities for cars, buses and bicycles

Revistalisation of the town centre

Small businesses and service providers are to be promoted. In addition, the municipality is working on the diversification of the local economy in order to create new offerings for the population. Existing facilities, such as the local FabLab and the digital hub, are also to be utilised to attract new businesses.
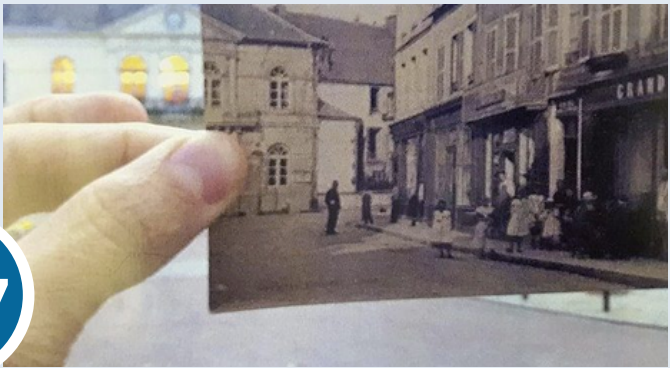

Refurbisahment of buildings

As an initial measure for implementing the co-created local development strategy, the municipality supported the transformation of a barn into a cultural space. This project was pursued in partnership with cultural associations and a theatre company. The municipality is also carrying out renovation work on building facades to improve the quality of life in the city.

2027

In Focus:
Improving digital skills, infrastructure and services

Goal:

In the late 1990ies, Lormes started to explore the potentials that the use of digital technologies holds for economic, social and cultural development in rural areas. From the beginning, citizens and local businesses were seen as key stake holders. Therefore, the aim was threefold, namely to:

- strengthen digital competences and skills on the part of citizens and local businesses.
- establish a powerful digital infrastructure that citizens and local businesses can use for their own purposes.
- create digital service offerings responding to concrete needs of citizens and local businesses.

Experience to date:

Since its creation in 2008, the digital hub has become a viable instrument for harnessing digital technologies for the local development in Lormes and the surrounding area. Since 2015, an open workshop affiliated to the digital hub - the so called FabLab - has been used to promote a culture of "do it yourself". It is equipped with a 3D printer and scanner, a digital milling machine and a hot wire cutter. A robot kit and a digital embroidery machine are available as well. Here, for example, children from schools and the social centre are taught the basics of robot programming, but also how to assemble a battery, a motor, a controller, and action and motion sensors. The main point is to show that anyone is capable of inventing and creating with the help of computer-controlled tools.

As part of the "Village of the Future" process which started in 2016, financial support could be secured to enable the Digital Hub to offer training and mediation service as a 'centre of excellence' for the commercial and public sectors on behalf of the county and the regional government. In addition, as the Bourgogne-Franche-Comté region is huge and has no transversal railway axis, a public room and a state-of-the-art video conference room now provide a well equipped meeting place for citizens and associations from Lormes and the surrounding communities. Moreover, the office rooms available in the digital hub are used by freelancers and employed teleworkers.

Beyond promoting the deployment of a powerful digital infrastructure in terms of a high-speed broadband network, a multi-stakeholder digital service co-creation process was launched. The aims was to create digital services that would meet the needs of the local community. As an outcome, a home care provider organisation started to offer tele-geriatric consultations in Lormes. Another initiative was launched in collaboration with teachers to develop digital teaching tools tailored to the specific needs of each class. The FabLab also began to support school education. To improve the digital inclusion of elderly people, young people volunteering for an NGO (the Seniors Génération Mouvement, offered hands-on support in the community as so called 'Fibre Advsiors'.

> ""To make of Lormes a project factory, we need to create the conditions for innovation. It means developing relationship with all local stakeholders and co-creating together a 'smart village'."
>
> **Christian Paul, Mayor of Lormes**

Next steps:

- Introduction of a participatory budget that allows stakeholders to decide on public spending through voting.
- Implementation of actions identified in the local development strategy for promoting inter-communal mobility.
- Implementation of actions identified in the local development strategy for diversifying the local economy.
- Continuation of the civic engagement process involving the local community in further strategy implementation measures.

Governance & participation

Local governance (public sector): All activities are coordinated by the elected mayor with the support of a team within the local administration. The team participates an 'innovation lab' that was set up in the framework of the 'villages of the future' process in 2016. The so called 'villages of the future lab' (Labo) is composed of elected officials from 14 municipalities, public servants and experts who bring in their specific skills such as service designers and creativity facilitators. Through the 'Labo', Lormes capitalises on good practices and mutual exchanges with other municipalities.

Local community (civil society): There are about 43 associations in Lormes. Roughly, every second inhabitant is involved in at least one association. These are strongly committed to contribute to local community life. Local associations are therefore an important channel utilised by the local government for reaching out to the citizens. Through the associations, many residents are regularly mobilised to participate in cultural, social and other activities such as digital training. Younger people are often addressed via social media, e.g. to participate in co-design workshops to create an attractive youth meeting place.

Businesses: Local businesses were considered as key stakeholders right from the beginning, e.g. when setting-up and sucessively expanding the digital hub. Commercial enterprises were involved in the fibre-to-the-home pilot launched later in 2015, e.g. when it comes to installing and operating the technical network infrastructure. Furthermore, local businesses were actively involved in the co-creation of the local development strategy, and they now collaborate with the municipality when it comes to implemented concrete measures in line with the strategy's implementation roadmap.

Research (scientific sector): Lormes actively seeks opportunities for collaborating with the scientific arena, for instance in the framework of the 'villages of the future lab'. Beyond this, relationships with universities were established. For example, Lormes welcomed three groups of students for two weeks and worked with them on different local development topics, e.g. in the context of the FabLab and for developing an open space for local associations. Students were also involved in an initiative to counteract long-term unemployment in the territory.

Community engagement process

The involvement of the local community started with the establishment of a local digital mission association in the early 2000s. Also in subsequent activities, such as the fibre-to-the-home pilot, care was taken to involve the local community in a joint planning and implementation process. In course of the 'villages for the future' process citizen participation in local policy development was further institutionalised.

The ideas and aspirations of the residents were to be taken as a point of departure for further policy development. To this end, the entire community was invited to participate in a systematic process of co-designing a local development strategy. All residents were invited to participate in moderated sessions addressing a common question: "How do you imagine Lormes in 10 years from now?" Consultants specialized in citizen participation, architects and designers were involved for systematically gathering and structuring the residents' ideas. Based on this material, a strategy document entitled "Lormes, the sweet town" was jointly developed by the public administration and the experts involved, including an implementation roadmap until 2027.

The municipality now works with citizens, businesses, associations on a continuous basis to validate every implementation step. To this end, monthly meetings are held for gathering stake holder feedback in a systematic manner.

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Further information:
Website of Lormes: https://lormespetitevilledufutur.fr/
Smart Rural 27 village profile of Lormes: *https://www.smartrural27.eu/village/lormes/*